

Tim and the Hidden People

Tim meets Captain Jory

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Illustrated by Pat Cook



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It was very cold. Tim put another blanket on his bed when he went upstairs that night.

It was a red blanket, and it made him feel warm just to look at it.



When he woke up in the morning, the room seemed very bright. He jumped out of bed, and ran across to the window.

The Yard was covered in snow. The roofs of the houses were white, and the railings looked as if someone had spread white icing along them.

The sky was dark grey.



Tim pulled on his clothes, and ran downstairs.

He could hear Aunt May in the kitchen, but he slipped out of the front door and across The Yard.



He ran across the snow, and out into the road, to look at the canal.

It was covered in ice.

Tim picked up a stone, and tossed it into the canal.

The ice broke. The stone dropped into the black water below.

As he went back to The Yard, it began to snow again.



It snowed all day, and when Tim went out after tea there were four or five inches of snow in The Yard.

The sky was still dark, and the lights were beginning to go on in the windows of the houses.



Miss Miff came down the steps of the house. She was carrying a little grey kitten. She held it out by the scruff of its neck, and Tim could see that she was very angry.



“Tim!” cried Miss Miff, as soon as she saw him. “Tim! Did you put this cat in my room?”

Tim shook his head. “No,” he said.

“You must have done,” said Miss Miff. “No one else would.”

“But I didn’t,” said Tim.

“Well, I won’t have it,” said Miss Miff.

She stepped out into The Yard.



“What – what are you going to do with it?” asked Tim.

“Drown it,” said Miss Miff. “Throw it in the canal. I hate cats.”

“But you can’t!” cried Tim.

“Oh yes I can,” said Miss Miff. She set off across The Yard.

“But – don’t! Please don’t!” cried Tim.

Miss Miff didn’t even look round.

Tim picked up a handful of snow, packed it into a ball, and threw it.



The snowball hit Miss Miff in the back of the neck.

With a yell, she dropped the kitten and spun round.

“You bad boy!” she cried. “You wicked boy! I’ll tell your aunt. I’ll get the policeman!”

The snow ran down the back of her neck.

She took a step towards Tim, shaking her fist at him.



Miss Miff's hat suddenly fell over her eyes.
"Oh!" she cried. She tried to pull it up, but
the hat wouldn't move.

"Oh!" cried Miss Miff. "Help! Help!"

She struggled to pull off the hat.

Tim stood still and stared.



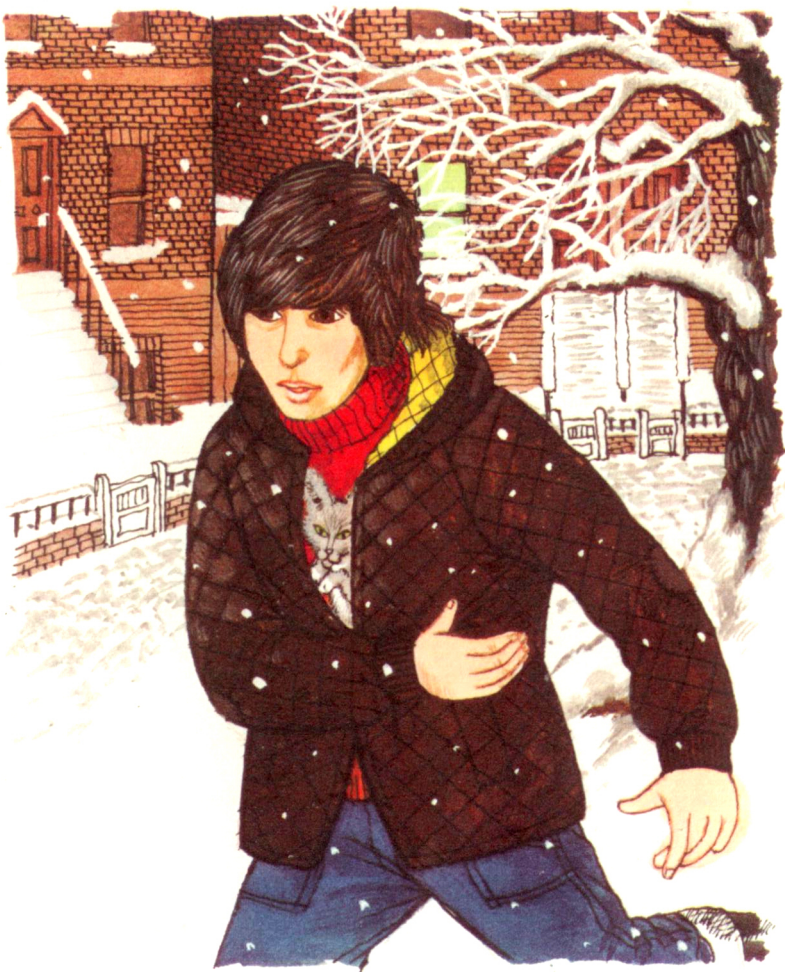
“Quick, Tim! Get the kitten!” said a voice from the tree.

Tim looked up.

Tobias was standing on a branch, his legs deep in the snow.

His eyes were shining, and his tail was twitching.

“Be *quick*, Tim! Get the kitten,” he said.
“Take it inside.”



The little kitten was half lost in the deep snow.
It was struggling along, mewling.

Tim picked it up, slipped it under his coat,
and ran into the house.



Aunt May was just coming up from the kitchen.
Tim ran past her and upstairs to his room.
He put the kitten down on his bed and went
to the window.



Mr. Berryman, who lived in the corner house on the other side of The Yard, was trying to help Miss Miff. The hat was still over her face, and Mr. Berryman was pulling at it. Miss Miff was shouting for help and waving her arms.

As Tim watched, the hat suddenly came off.

Tim looked across at the tree.

Tobias had vanished.



Tim looked at the kitten.

It was a poor, wet little thing. It had grey fur, a white chest and white paws.

He dried it as well as he could and made a nest for it in the blanket.

The kitten began to purr.

Tim went out, shutting the door behind him.
He ran downstairs.



As he came to the hall, he saw that Miss Miff's door was open.

Aunt May was with her, and he could hear Miss Miff almost shouting with anger.

"That boy!" she cried. "It was all that boy!"

Tim slipped out of the hall and downstairs to the kitchen in the basement. He took a saucer and filled it with milk.

Miss Miff was still shouting "That boy!" as he slipped back upstairs to the kitten, but she didn't see him.



The kitten had just finished the milk, and was beginning to wash itself, when Tim heard Aunt May calling.

“Tim!” cried Aunt May. “Tim! Come down here!”

He opened the door and went slowly downstairs. Aunt May was in the hall.

She went down to the kitchen with him.
“Now then, Tim,” she said. “Did you throw a snowball at Miss Miff?”

Tim nodded.

“She was going to drown the kitten,” he said.

“She says you put the kitten in her room. Did you?” demanded Aunt May.

Tim shook his head.

“Where is it now?” asked Aunt May.

“It – it’s upstairs. But I *must* keep it. *Please* Aunt May, *please!* You *can’t* let her drown it,” said Tim.

“You can’t keep it, Tim,” said Aunt May.
“Miss Miff hates cats. She wouldn’t stay, if there was a cat in the house. And we need her rent. You’ll have to let it go.”

“But you can’t turn it out in the snow,” said Tim. “That’s as bad as drowning it.”

Aunt May looked at him.

Tim’s face was white.

“Slip over and see Mr. Berryman,” she said.
“You tell him about it. I think he might look after it for you.”

Tim tore upstairs and out into The Yard.

Mr. Berryman was just going back into his house.

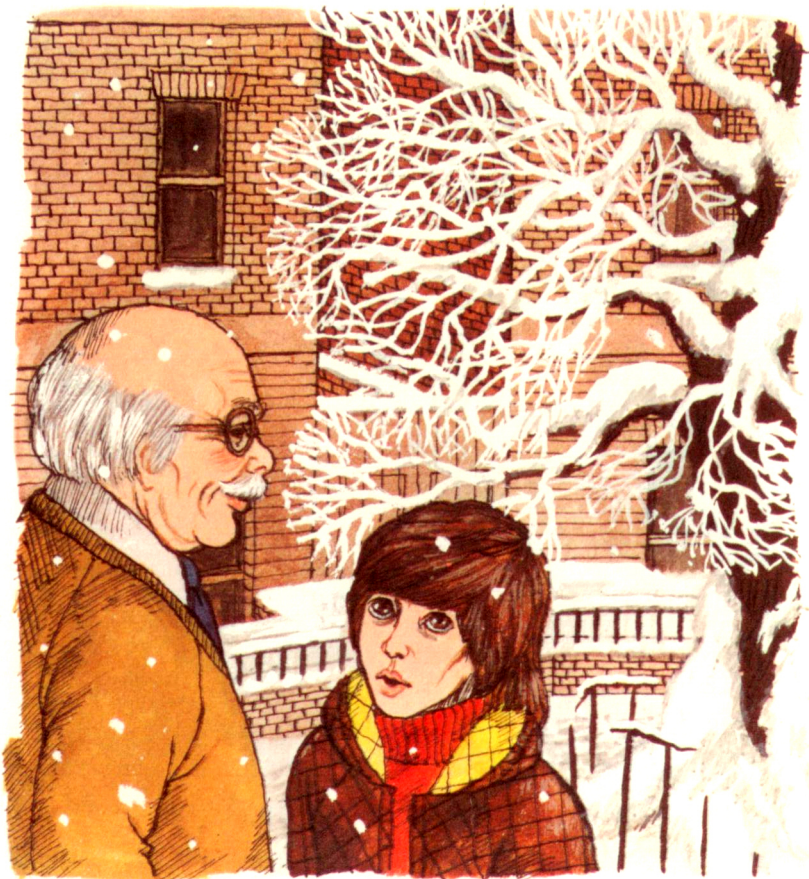


“Mr. Berryman! Mr. Berryman!” shouted Tim.

Mr. Berryman turned round.

“Well, Tim, what is it?” he asked.

Tim poured out the story.



Old Mr. Berryman listened.

“I don’t think –” he began, as Tim finished. Then he stopped. He saw Tim’s face.

“All right, Tim,” he said. “Bring the kitten over. Come to think of it, I’d like to have a cat about the house.”



Tim ran back for the kitten.

"It's all right," he shouted down the stairs to Aunt May, as he rushed in, and upstairs to his room.

He tucked the kitten under his coat, and ran back downstairs, and across The Yard to Mr. Berryman.

"It's a fine-looking little kitten," said Mr. Berryman as Tim handed it to him.

Tim looked at it. Now the kitten was dry, it did look much better.

"Come and see it any time you like, Tim," said Mr. Berryman.

He went inside.



Tim went slowly back to the house.

Aunt May met him at the door.

"Miss Miff is still very upset, Tim," she said. "You'd better go up to your room. I don't want her to see you. It will only make things worse."

Tim nodded, and went slowly upstairs.

He opened the door of the room, and stopped dead.



The light was fading from the sky, but someone had lit the candles, and in the candlelight Tim saw a man sitting on the old chair, waiting for him.

He had a three-cornered hat on his head and a black patch over one eye. He had a long blue coat, with brass buttons. One sleeve was empty. It was pinned across his chest. His other hand was resting on a sword, which lay across his knees.



Tobias jumped down from Tim's bed.
"Come in and shut the door, Tim," he said.
"This is Captain Jory."
The man in the chair stood up.
"So you're Tim," he said.



"Are you – are you one of the Hidden People?" asked Tim.

Captain Jory laughed. "Of course I am," he said. "What do you think? They would lock me up if they could see me."

"They're running a cargo tomorrow night," said Tobias. "Would you like to go?"

"Where are you running the cargo?" asked Tim.

"Down the canal," said Captain Jory. "The snow will be gone by the morning. It's beginning to rain now. There will be a full moon tomorrow night. We always like to run a cargo when the moon is full."

"I'll come," said Tim. "Of course I will."

"Good," said Tobias. "After the way you saved Sebastian, we knew we could trust you."

"Who is Sebastian?" asked Tim.

"The kitten, of course," said Tobias. "His name is Sebastian. You left him with Mr. Berryman, didn't you?"

Tim nodded. "But Sebastian isn't one of the Hidden People," he said. "We could all see him."

"He's the son of a friend of mine," said Tobias. "I like to keep an eye on him. And I haven't forgotten Miss Miff. No, I won't forget Miss Miff."



Tobias seemed to grow bigger. His claws were out and Tim saw that they were very long and sharp.

Tobias' eyes were very bright.

"What are you going to do to Miss Miff?"

Tim asked.

"Nothing, tonight," said Tobias. "But you wait. You'll see."

Tim suddenly felt afraid.

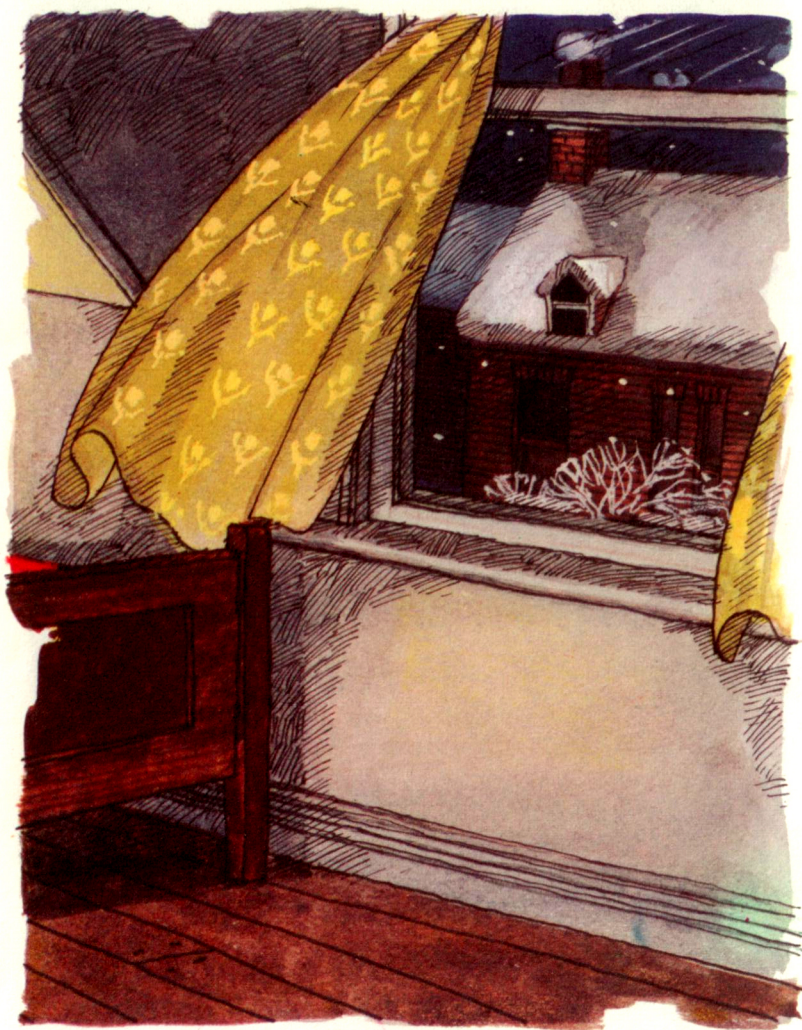
"You – you won't hurt her?" he said.



The wind blew in at the open window.

The candles went out.

Tim felt for the light switch, and clicked it on. Nothing happened. The electric light never seemed to work when Tobias was about.



He found the matches and lit the candles.
The room was empty.



Tim opened the door, and listened.

The light was on in the hall below, but the house was silent.

He crept downstairs.

As he got to the hall, he heard Miss Miff. She was in the kitchen, talking to Aunt May.

"Well, I won't do anything *this* time," Tim heard her say. "But if that boy throws another snowball, I'll see the policeman!"



Tim crept softly back up the stairs to his own room.



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